

October 10, 2023

CUNY LAW JLSA STATEMENT ON EVENTS IN OCCUPIED PALESTINE

In this season of renewal and self-reflection, and as we begin the year 5784, the Jewish students at the CUNY School of Law wish to express our uncompromising solidarity with the Palestinian people in their righteous struggle for self-determination. This feeling is accompanied by a profound sense of grief over the lives that have been lost. We are steadfast in our belief that Zionism – as a political ideology predicated on theft and destruction – serves to imperil both Jews and Palestinians, even though its proponents only target the latter.

In his analysis of the global anti-colonial struggle, Frantz Fanon [wrote](#), “We revolt simply because, for many reasons, we can no longer breathe.” Such is the case for the Palestinian people, who have, for generations, been made to suffocate under the deadly weight of the Zionist project. This settler-colonial enterprise, promoted by [antisemites](#) within the British Empire following World War I, has taken shape across decades of uninterrupted brutality. In 1948, Zionist militias unleashed a campaign of terror marked by [mass murder](#) and [systematic sexual violence](#), razing [over 500 Palestinian villages](#) and forcing more than [750 thousand Palestinians](#) off their native lands.

Today, [nearly 6 million Palestinians](#) are classified as refugees by the United Nations, [1.5 million of whom](#) are crowded into refugee camps in Occupied Palestine and in neighboring countries. In the West Bank, the constant proliferation of illegal settlements has advanced a regime of [apartheid](#), wherein Jewish settlers are afforded political and economic rights while Palestinians are subjected to constant [surveillance](#), harassment, [violence and intimidation](#).

Meanwhile, Gaza’s 2 million inhabitants are frequently deprived of even the most basic of services, such as [electricity](#) and [clean water](#), since Israel exercises almost complete control over the [territory’s borders](#) and [economy](#). In light of these facts, international human rights organizations [have repeatedly called](#) Gaza “the world’s largest open-air prison.” In recent days, Israeli fighter jets – many of which are [American-made](#) – have indiscriminately bombed Gaza, [leveling entire neighborhoods](#) and murdering [hundreds](#) of men, women and children.

We recognize, therefore, that the Palestinian people are resisting the inherently cruel Zionist project and are facing down the most powerful countries in the world in doing so. Although [international law states](#) that all peoples have a right to self-determination, the international community has only served to aid Israel in depriving Palestinians of this right. Western-backed diplomatic efforts such as the [Oslo Accords](#) have proven to be little more than farcical propaganda campaigns, and institutions like the UN have consistently demonstrated an [unwillingness and/or inability](#) to hold Israel accountable over its [blatant disregard](#) for international law.

While Israel is given free rein to [massacre protesters](#), as it did during the 2018 Great March of Return, the Palestinian-led [Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions \(BDS\)](#) campaign – which [aims to disrupt](#) the financial machinery of the occupation – has been [smeared](#) as “anti-semitic” by

western [politicians](#) and media. In line with these bad-faith attacks, [37 states](#) and several [European countries](#) have enacted anti-BDS policies. These realities all contribute to the profoundly desperate situation in Occupied Palestine.

Since no form of Palestinian resistance is ever justified in the eyes of Zionists, it is no surprise that CUNY's administration has once again chosen to [malign](#) student-organizers who are demanding an end to Israel's illegal occupation. A few short months ago, the Board of Trustees [defamed](#) CUNY Law's commencement speaker as a proponent of "hate speech", simply because she identified white supremacy and capitalist extraction as foundational elements of all settler-colonial projects – including Israel's theft of Palestinian lands and systematic police terror against Black and brown communities in the United States.

It is clear, therefore, that the CUNY administration does not speak for its student population, which is largely composed of working class New Yorkers and people of color. As Jewish students of a school that claims the motto "law in the service of human needs", we will continue to pursue *tikkun olam* – the repairing of the world. This necessarily includes our unwavering support for the Palestinian people in their decades-long resistance against Zionist brutality, as well as for our classmates who are courageously advancing that struggle.

In solidarity,

CUNY Jewish Law Students Association